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ABSTRACT

A college reading program at Grambling College of Louisiana, funded through Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965, is reported. The cooperation of library personnel with the program of the college Communicative and Study Skills Center provided students with cppcrtunities to become acquainted with library facilities and to increase their interest in reading. In addition to the regular program, the college began extended remedial programs, library skills classes, a film series, and discussions of reading, especially of books relating to black culture. The experiences of students and staff were sufficiently encouraging to warrant continuation and extension of the program. (MS)

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LIBRARIES, LIBRARIANS IN A COLLEGE READING PROGRAM

by

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This paper is written in the optimistic challenge to a recent news article quoting Mr. William J. Worrell of Pilgrim Book Society. Mr. Worrell reveals that "Studies show that, students who get the best grades and learn the most in college, are usually the ones who were library users in high school. Other studies indicate that high school youngsters who use their library the most are those who got in the habit in grammar school. It's no wonder that most educators agree that you need a library to teach reading today." Reported are the experiences of Grambling College of Louisiana and the A.C. Lewis Memorial Library in grappling with the actualization of such an optimistic challenge.

A college librarian whose roots and service program are formulated in a four-year multi-purpose college, receives a strong incentive and challenge to motivate and work with too large a segment of students to whom the library encounter is a relatively new experience. This librarian must first make the library relevant to achieving. This is a manifold job involving cooperation not only with students but with faculty.

Such a manifold challenge has been the task of the library staff where previous teaching and learning experiences have primarily utilized the textbook. This manifold challenge suggests that the librarian knows not only the curriculum, teaching problems, but more decisively the learning patterns and problems of the students. There is yet no reference made to selection and utilization of materials. Without appropriate and adequate knowledge of students' capabilities and potentials, much material would be selected in a vacuum and soon relegated to little or non-use.

In such a situation, it is essential and vital that the library staff assume initiative in developing and continuously working with a Reading Program. This paper purports to reveal the role(s) inherent in a traditional Remedial Reading Program that had met with limited achievement in terms of improvement in reading. Reference to problems in this particular college are not unique to this college, but are repeatedly found where students have reading, vocabulary and comprehension problems. These problems are further mitigated by the absence of functional and relevant library resources. Specific citation is made to one librarian's cooperative role as a member of a Task Force Team on Reading. The first job of this team was to draw a clearly delineated statement of the need for help in remediation and improvement of students' communicative skills. This statement led to the development of proposals submitted to the State's Higher Education Facilities and subsequently to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. These proposals were approved and the funds for the Communicative and Study Skills Center became available under the Grant Agreement, Part A, Title VI, Higher Education Act of 1965. With the approval of the proposals and subsequent grants, the head librarian shared the responsibility of leadership of the Task Force Team on Reading and the development of CSSC with Dr. Helen L. Richards, Head of Department of Elementary Education. The Task Force Team was composed of faculty members representing

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the various disciplines in General Studies. The co-chairmen and Task Force Team of the program labelled Communicative and Study Skills Center (CSSC) initiated the following recommendations:

- That the course Reading Laboratory be scheduled daily for a minimum of nine weeks.
- That students be given varied opportunities in terms of learning experiences and use of materials and equipment. An example students in the CSSC work on a machine for 30 minutes and spend the balance of the time in discussion, reading, writing, and/or reinforcing experiences through auto-tutorial experiences.
- That resource persons from various disciplines, including librarians, be secured as needed to work with faculty and staff.
- That the college initiate a pilot program in reading -- communication with the already existing Reading Program. This pilot program would thus embrace the intended purposes and goals of the intended CSSC. This proposed college-wide CSSC would provide for giving assistance to a large number of students in General Studies the opportunity to increase their proficiencies in reading, communicative and study skills.
- That the pilot study would include freshman students working for survival and advanced students enrolled in elementary and secondary education seminars.
- That students assigned to remedial experiences would not be permitted to drop such courses until a satisfactory performance level had been achieved.
- That the team-teaching approach would be utilized in these courses of remediation, especially Remedial English and Reading Laboratory classes. The decision was made to purchase the Language Masters and media facilities for individualized learning experiences. This effort involved close articulation between the departments of Education, English, Mathematics, Social Sciences and the library as as a primary reservoir of books and related media.

In summary, inherent in these stated goals was a multi-faceted thrust. The primary and immediate purpose of the Center would be to help students develop a survival level of reading, communicative and study skills necessary for adequate academic performance. The other thrust envisioned continuing services for the college student throughout his college career: recognition was made of the student who may be proficient in specific skills, but for other reasons has failed to perform to his potential. The third aspect of this multi-emphasis was the supporting and cooperative role the Center would undertake with the library in developing the students' social, cultural and intellectual undergirdings.

It was against the background of these developing directions and recommendations that the college librarian was actively involved as co-chairman of the CSSC. Emphases and responsibilities went far beyond providing library resources. Aside from co-operative responsibility in writing the proposals to secure financial assistance, the librarian shared actively in selecting the site, choosing equipment and helping to steer and coordinate the program. Thus, the role of the librarian included joint responsibility for initiating, sustaining and directing the program.

Based on much study and evaluation a joint decision was made to purchase the Craig Readers to provide opportunity for individualized and independent study efforts. Initially a large number of Program C's were purchased to accommodate the large number of students reading at a level less than that adequate for survival during the freshman year. Since this initial

purchase in 1967 the program-growth demonstrates that more students are now using the advanced program. A mimeographed study by Anzenne, Clark, and Berry (1) reveals that improvement in some of the reading skills during the course as measured by the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and the Craig Reading Program was significant. Selection of additional equipment to enhance the individualized study approach includes filmstrips, projectors, tape-recorders, language masters, super 8mm loop projectors and mirascreens, closed-circuit television, projectors (overhead, opague), slides and 16mm shadowscopes as well as individual carrels. The librarian gave consultative advice in selection and purchasing of audio-visual materials including recordings, films, filmstrips, loops and transparencies.

The library staff had a major responsibility in co-ordinating these audio-visual materials with books and other library resources that enable and enrich a reading program. There was full cognizance that reading as a functional and meaningful activity was based on the achieving of reading proficiency that would allow for a feeling of productive achievement.

Library Sponsored Services

The library felt the need for direct involvement and participation in not only the Communicative and Study Skills Center, but entered into a cooperative effort to initiate and sustain various types of reading programs for the total college population. There was an early recognition given to seemingly universal weaknesses among American university and college students. Causative factors underlying the proposal for the development of Communicative and Study Skills Center have been identified as functional illiteracy, lack of interest in reading, and the inability to write or speak adequately. Mrs. Hazel J. Jones, Associate Librarian, had as a major responsibility the development of Readers' Services to meet these pressing needs, to promote the library as an integral phase of the instructional program and to develop in students the desire and skills for continuing self-education. This portion of the paper will report on Reading Programs developed and sponsored by the Readers' Services Division and Reading Programs developed cooperatively with other departments of the college. In this latter connection, the library had a supporting role serving as appropriate facility and in many instances suggesting and making available relevant materials.

Through Readers' Services efforts were made to render the library's assistance in the development and acquisition of basic library skills. The Readers' Service made an introduction to reading materials related to students' personal experiences, reading capacities and potentials. A case in point was the cooperation of the library staff with instruction of Freshman English 101. These students experienced for the first time the reading of regional works of Shirley Ann Grau, Carson McCuller, the delineating novel, the Invisible Man by Ellison. Students became acquainted with literary works of such writers as Margaret Walker, Gwendolyn Brooks, and James Baldwin.

Library Enrichment Programs for Students

In 1966 the library secured, on rental basis, the documentary film series of ten titles produced under the lead title of THE AMERICAN NEGRO. This Film-Discussion Program was initiated prior to the growing pressures and challenges of the current black studies emphases. Films included in this series were The Third Chance, Sanctuary and Spear, White Guilt; Black Shame, Who Am I?, A Sense of the Future, The Economic Straight Jacket, Where

Shall We Live, Is Justice Color Blind, The Struggle at Hand and We Shall Overcome. Accompanying bibliographies of selected readings on each title were provided. Discussion was stimulated by the cooperation of faculty members from the related academic departments. Attendance and response at these series were strong and rewarding.

This pattern of providing discussion was continued as a thought-provoking technique in future series. Interested students also shared in this leadership role. In 1967 the film-discussion period was focused on issue-oriented films. The purpose of this particular series was to stimulate student inquiry and discussion. Films in this series included Marked for Failure, The Revolution in Human Expectations, The Emotional Dilemma, Being in Love, Religious Revolution and the Void, Marriage Problems, Communism in the United States and Omowale The Child Returns Home.

Summer reading programs were spear-headed by students enrolled in Library Education with faculty direction and guidance. The 1966 program had as its theme KEEP GROWING - READ! The 1966 program featured panel discussions on a variety of books analyzed in several lead titles including Books That Changed the World by Robert Downs, Profiles in Courage by John F. Kennedy and We Dissent by Hoke Norris, editor that discussed views of Southerners who dared to speak out on racial issues. Students had the principle responsibility for serving as discussion leaders and resource persons. The 1967 program encompassed the theme READING FOR UNDERSTANDING OF SELF AND OTHERS. Titles suggested for reading and discussion included books related to philosophical, psychological, cultural and sociological foundations.

This series was implemented with reference to the following facets

I. Man seeks to understand himself through knowledge of
   - A. Social change
     1. Invention and discovery
     2. Factors and influencing innovations
     3. Impact of technological change on institutions
     4. Impact of mobility on society
   - B. Behavior: The ways of men
     1. Contents of culture
     2. Cultural differences
     3. Cultural values
   - C. Foundations of personality
     1. Heredity and environment
     2. Maturation and socialization

II. Man seeks to understand others through knowledge of
   - A. Social institutions
     1. Educational patterns
     2. Religious patterns
   - B. Economic order
   - C. Political order
   - D. Racial and ethnic groups in the social structure

The 1968 program reflected analysis and discussion of views represented by writers of national status reflecting on the southern spectrum. The importance of these summer series lay in the responsibility students were encouraged to manifest in reading, discussing materials and involving other college students as active audience participants.

The Library's Cooperative Role in College Reading Programs

The Great Books Colloquium met on the second Wednesday of each month in the Liberal Arts Conference Room of the College Library to examine conditions of society and the moral dilemmas of the self as they are explored by some of the literary artists. Since no novel course was offered in the English curriculum, it was hoped that English majors, and other interested students, would learn, through discussion, that the substance in a great book can be fully touched, handled, turned over, looked at from one angle or another, and - finally - possessed. The Colloquium afforded an opportunity for them to pursue the implicit meaning of a work -- the moral, social or religious substance therein. Vicariously, participants became aware of critical theories, canons and tastes of the past and present. The coordinator, Miss Margaret Grant, reported in a summary statement that finally, there was free communication from their private, dialectic observations and responses with others whose responses differed from their own -- they may depart intellectual foes, but with a violent thrust to read more critically for an anchor. Books discussed in the Spring of 1969 included Dostoyevsky, The Idiot, Notes from the Underground, Parts I and II Crime and Punishment, and Brothers Karamazov Wilbur, Richard, Things of This World, Ciardi, John, Mid-Century American Poets, Snodgrass, W.D., Heart's Needle, Ellison, Ralph, Invisible Man, Jones, LeRoi, Baptism Toilet and MacLeish, A., J.B.

For over a period of twenty years, spear-headed by the English Department, Miss Bessie E. Dickerson, Chairman, the college has successfully sustained a Book Review Forum. This forum has been coordinated by Mr. Grant Moss of the English Department.

Members of the library staff have served on the advisory board. Each year, Readers' Services has prepared an annotated list of books pertinent to the concerns of the forum.

Faculty members, instructors from other colleges and Grambling College students have been featured as reviewers and discussants.

The longevity of the forum and its continuing appeal to the faculty, student body and members of the community attests to its significance in an on-going interest in reading.

The current prevalence and emphasis on the Black Experience are expressed in the academic curriculum and related curricula activities. Several interrelated departments with Mrs. Yolanda Mix serving as chairman, have developed a weekly discussion group with students in Afro-American Literature serving as discussants and analysts of books by black writers. These students are also available for informal class appearances to review and discuss books at the specific request of interested instructors and classes. Such analyses have been presented on an average of five per week. This service is now being extended to co-related campus organizations including religious organizations. The purpose of this discussion program is similar in objectives to the design of the course Afro-American Literature. This course is designed to explore the complexity, diversity, and essential humanity of the Afro-American as revealed by eloquent writers. Beginning with African, Caribbean and subterranean background, there is inclusion of Black Americans from Frederick Douglas to contemporary writers, both black and white. The current emphasis on Black Studies has motivated students to read more and exhibit a desire to personally own paperback books on Black culture. Librarians are available for help in reading, guidance, discussion groups, to work with these students who are experiencing new vistas through reading. This desire and pride in personal ownership of books is gratifying. This seeking and searching for information is challenging to librarians. Librarians seek out every opportunity to meet with groups - large and small - to transfer to groping but

concerned students the magic quality of the printed word. This printed word is cooperatively infused with the appeal of the advantage of the audio-visual media. There is concerted effort on the part of the library staff to coordinate resources that will explain, clarify and enrich the value of the expressed idea regardless of the format - audio tapes, recording - super 8mm loop, 16mm film, transparency, etc. The challenge to the librarian is to reveal and impress on the seeking student that this multi-media approach may be aptly termed library resources. The cooperative efforts of AV - TV personnel, CSSC staff result in a composite catalog showing resources on a given topic - regardless of format.

This librarian reporting the cooperative efforts of staff and faculty feels encouraged and stimulated that these efforts are not planted on barren soil. They will show emerging growth, this growth will permeate the peer group and eventually the peer group will be actively involved in selection, participation and evaluation. The reverence for books is for the ages, the acquiring, acquisition and immediate use is now, this is the challenge librarians brace themselves to meet, it is worth it!!

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